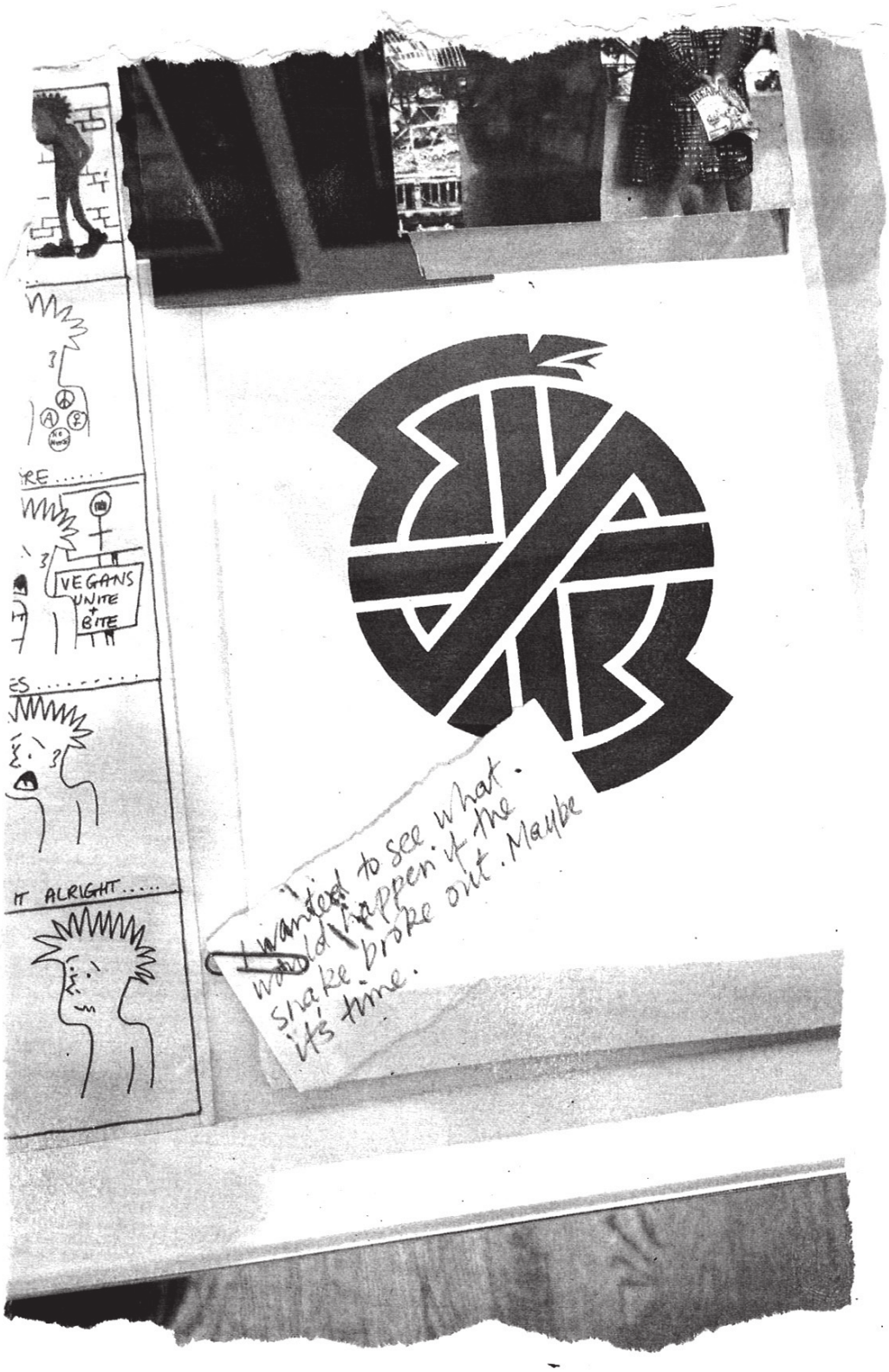

Issue #4 — January 2025

THE COUNTERFORCE

hardcore punk underground

IN THIS ISSUE:

YEAR-END LISTS FROM COUNTERFORCE CONTRIBUTORS
REVIEWS • GEE VAUCHER ART SHOW • BOOK REVIEW OF GRAVITY'S RAINBOW • A PUNK'S GUIDE TO PRINTING ZINES

What is this? **The Counterforce** is an initiative to push back against the corporate capture of hardcore punk. Social media apps and streaming platforms dominate how we interact online, including how we share and distribute our music and ideas. The corporations that run these platforms extract massive profits from us, which they use to fund and facilitate exploitation, war, and genocide. Meanwhile, our independent and underground alternatives have eroded.

The goal of The Counterforce is to strengthen and grow the hardcore punk underground that still exists outside of this corporate capture. Rather than funnel punk into profit-driven walled gardens, we want to foment and encourage a culture that is autonomous and independent. This is not just a nostalgic, backward-facing project—we want to explore new alternatives for spreading hardcore punk online and offline.

You are reading issue #4 of the print version of The Counterforce.

Find the files to print and distribute this zine (and others like it) yourself online at **https://the-counterforce.org**

There, you will also find the other arms of The Counterforce:

A WEB ZINE

This site publishes reviews, letters, scene reports, profiles/interviews, rants, and how-to guides, all with an emphasis on projects that try to exist outside of corporate platforms.

In part, we hope this will encourage human-driven curation, recommendation, and discovery. Find out about new bands that aren't on the streaming sites. Submit a review of your own band. Compile a scene report or show review and send it in. We also publish articles and DIY how-to guides to help empower other punks to build and participate in a scene that's less centered around evil apps.

All this is published online, but also compiled into regular print zine editions to bring paper back to the punk show (like the version you are reading now).

A DIRECTORY OF SIMILARLY ALIGNED PROJECTS

The Internet is breaking down. Websites outside of a handful of apps have slowly disappeared, and the ones that are still out there are harder and harder to find.

The Counterforce provides a directory of these websites: blogs, archives, distros, zines, radio shows and podcasts... anywhere hardcore punk can be found online (and maybe offline too!).

A PLACE TO EXPERIMENT WITH AND LEARN ABOUT ALTERNATIVES

It's easy to shit on the corporate social media and streaming platforms, but what other options are there? There are alternatives and we try them out—public online show calendars, open-source social media, self-hosted music sharing—and encourage other punks to join us.

THE COUNTERFORCE IS A DISTRIBUTED AND COMMUNITY PROJECT

Find everything online at: the-counterforce.org

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PRINT THIS ZINE

This zine is available on our website as a PDF you can print out and distribute yourself, with more coming soon.

STREET GLOVES – 2024 DEMO

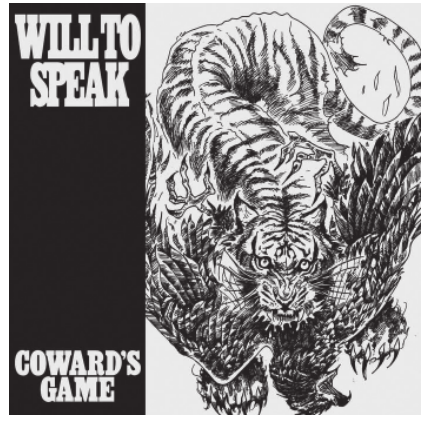
STREET GLOVES is back with another demo that gets right to the point. Punishing electronic d-beats, an oscillating siren(?), ripping power cords that punch the opening track "THE NEXT GENOCIDE" into full gear. A call to arms as the increasingly claustrophobic reality that the wars in Palestine, Sudan, Ethiopia and around the world are on display for us all to see, and will be on our doorstep if we don't act soon. "GOSPEL" keeps up the momentum and addresses the devastating and dehumanizing use of technology and weapons, operated by algorithms with indiscriminate targeting systems. A somewhat unsurprising and extremely satisfying addition to STREET GLOVES brilliant instrumentation is a hardcore breakdown in "UNLIMITED RISK" that'll get the whole room going side to side and wall to wall. This downright paranoid track will have you picking up change across the pit and smashing the next security camera you see on the street. The vocals on this new demo have more bark and more bite compared to the earlier STREET GLOVES work featuring a more shouted and exasperated delivery; a welcome change that asserts more confidence and determination especially highlighted on the "STRUGGLE FOREVER REDUX". The demo rounds out with a brilliant CRUCIFIX cover of "SEARCH FOR THE SUN". And if you're lucky enough to snag a cassette there's some sneaky remixes on the other side that will leave the dancefloor/DIY space/generator show fully torn up.

If you're not pumping your fist in the air and lighting firecrackers by the end of these songs, you might wanna check that pulse! This is music for the revolution that you and I have to start right here, right now!

STRUGGLE FOREVER

Find the demo here: https://streetg.love/s/2024-demo/
Or grab a tape at: https://vileintent.bigcartel.com/

–Misery



WILL TO SPEAK — Coward's Game

We have a problem in Montreal Hardcore: too many tough guy beatdown bands. WILL TO SPEAK was the solitary standout for awhile, bringing more of a posi/youth-crew influenced sound to the scene. So I'm happy they finally have a record coming out. The production is excellent and the riffs are great. Ample dive-bombs! WILL TO SPEAK's lineup is basically local shoe-gaze band SPITE HOUSE + Big Karl on vocals and XVX Dany on bass. It's kind of funny that the single biggest meathead-*looking* dude in Montreal's hardcore scene for the past 15 years is fronting the hardcore band with the most thoughtful lyrics and seemingly the only one with anything good to say between songs on the mic. I hope people follow the lead and step it up. I'm not sure it's enough for me to forgive the rap-rock part in the title track through ;)

LP available on From Within Records

Listen here: https://willtospeak.bandcamp.com/album/cowards-game

–Martin Force

A DIGITAL ZINE DISTRO

Major punk fanzines of the past fell victim to the rising costs of printing and shipping. We publish printable PDFs of our zines online for anyone to print and distribute themselves, and encourage other zinesters to submit their own.

What if instead of shipping zines around the world, any punk anywhere could log on, download some PDFs and scam some copies to have a fully stocked, PWYC zine distro at the next show? Print-It-Yourself!

A HARD LINE AGAINST CONTRIBUTING TO FURTHER CORPORATE CAPTURE OF OUR SUBCULTURE

– No links to Instagram, Spotify, Linktree, Discord, or other corporate platforms.
– No coverage of releases that are on major labels, or only available digitally on corporate streaming platforms.
– Always independent and not-for-profit.

For expanding the hardcore punk mutual aid autonomous zone.
For facilitating human curation and recommendation.
For hardcore punk with context and politics.

Against celebrity, ladder climbers, clout chasers and influencers.
Against the algorithmic flattening of our subculture.
Against the capitalist death machine and the corporate capture of hardcore punk.

Contributors to this issue: Ava, Belén, Biff Bifaro, Boris, Corn, Crimethinc. Ex-Workers Collective, Ghas, Greg the Builder, Hobbes, Martin Force, Misery, Nab, Ralph Rivera, Slim, Tay, Taylor Joy and VanisleJay. Layout and cover by Taylor Joy. Back cover photo by Greg.

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THE COUNTERFORCE 2024 TOP TEN ROUNDUP

It's the first end-of-a-year for The Counterforce (although only our 8th month anniversary), so this is our first time doing Top Tens. We've got a lovely selection from many of our regularly contributors as well as some first timers.

SLIM

Top 10 Sets/Gigs

- VERIFY @ lowbar
- GAZM Final ride
- BIG LAUGH on a Tuesday
- JAVA, PLUTO'S KISS, JUSTIFY, ONE TRACK MIND, INFLUX @ The NDG Legion
- D.U.L.F benefit show at Casa
- INFLUX in January
- FLOWER & PHANTOM for Dirty World
- EXTENSIVE SLAUGHTER
- VERIFY @ Madhouse
- PORTAL TOMB @ B7

GREG THE BUILDER

Ten of my favorite things that came out or sets I saw (in no real order)

- FLOWER – Heel Of The Next/Physical God 7"
- KRIEGSHOG – Love & Revenge LP
- THOU – Umbilical LP
- GODSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR – NO TITLE AS OF 13 FEBRUARY 2024 28,340 DEAD LP
- CHARLI XCX – BRAT LP
- THE WATCHER – Out of the Dark LP
- THE CURE – Songs of a Lost World LP
- CRASS – a Pictorial History book/Gee Vaucher Crassover art show @ White columns gallery
- SLANT live @ Foto Club, PHILLY, PA Nov 7, 2024
- SKITSYSTEM live @ CY Fest LA, CA Sept 21, 2024

sounds like the most refined, post-punk-guitar-drum-bass-vocals STRAWMAN ARMY so far. The use of extra instrumentation (e.g. the famous Xylophone), ambient field recording, additional percussion, jazzy beats, etc., all become less scattershot and are instead carefully deployed with consideration and care (and to greater impact).

Second, the recording quality has steadily improved. Now, I am normally biased towards low-production-value punk but in this case STRAWMAN ARMY is greatly served by audio clarity. The crisp guitars, punchy bass, and rolling drums are all perfectly distinct and in balance. A catchy riff is all the more-so when the distinct parts of all three instruments get stuck in your head in parallel. But more importantly, the vocals are clear and intelligible. The emotional range varies from a low talk, to a talk-shout, to an occasional sing-song, to the urgent emphasis achieved by two voices delivering the same line in unison. No matter where the voices are landing, you can hear every word perfectly.

I think punk has often suffered from being somewhat allergic to earnest and clear political messages. Punk has not been a monolith in this, but it has been the trend. It has been cringey or embarrassing to make clear political statements in your songs. People shy away from the challenge of making a commitment to a political analysis that they must be willing to articulate and defend (or change if confronted with more convincing ideas). The reaction to this underlying political uncomfortable-ness and/or laziness in our punk culture has been that often bands will make vague statements when necessary, and couch any message in winking imagery or impenetrable artistic pretension (thus escaping any chance of real engagement and critique) or stick to safe and simple sloganeering roughly equivalent to shouting "Nuclear War Bad" over and over, ad nauseam. Of course, that's if the lyrics are even decipherable at all—often there is no lyrics sheets and vocal delivery can be made completely unintelligible through all kinds of pretentious vocal affects or cave-reverb.

So why is Earthworks so refreshing? Besides the music being catchy and driving, the lyrics express a powerful political message of struggle against colonialism, war, and the domination and alienation that global capitalism wields against us all. This is delivered without mask of pretension or hint of irony—only some poetic artistry and a lot of sincerity and earnestness.

On paper you'd expect a record where the words "United States" and "America" appear (gratingly audible) some half-dozen times to sound as immature and cringey as ANTI-FLAG and likely to be just as mealy-mouthed. Instead, STRAWMAN ARMY achieves a powerful combination of political sincerity and poetic lyricism—you can tell clearly what the song is "about" and be moved to action by its message, but you don't feel like you are sitting through a lecture. This is the promise of great anarcho-punk.

The label write up mentions ZOUNDS, but in terms of anarcho-punk I hear more of THE MOB, I think because of the plodding looping rhythmic riffs, the crystal clear vocals, and the poetic balance of the lyrics. Driving songs like 'Staring At The Sun' remind me of sped up WIPERS riffs. And there is something about many of the guitar melodies that reminded me of other 2010-ish NYC bands but I still havn't placed who exactly. Must just be that NYC sound bleeding in.

I do not know the duo behind STRAWMAN ARMY personally, so I can't speak to their actual politics. But as a long-time anarchist, the messages delivered in this record resonates with me greatly. Even though it sometimes feels like it has taken the past four years of particularly heinous and observable acts of dominating white supremacy and wars of colonial genocide to rouse punks-at-large into a higher level of political action and awareness, I am all for it. I hope the appeal and success of a record like Earthworks in this current age will show punks how much more powerful we can be if we all shed the safety blanket of artistic pretensions and isolating layers of irony and connect with each other—sincere in our politics and earnest in our desire for change.

(self-?)released by D4MT LABS INC. / La Vida Es Un Mus and Distributed by Sorry State Records in the USA

Listen here: https://d4mtlabsinc.bandcamp.com/album/earthworks

—Martin Force

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guttural war cries of guitarist/vocalist Aíne. Opening track "SELF" is a rallying cry against individualism and the oppressive trappings of society. "TURADH" is the gloomy, building instrumental that twists around the drums and guitars, setting the stage perfectly for the closing track "REPUDIATION". A blazing, double kick induced miasma of crust that demands you "get off your knees", seize the power of your words and actions, rise up against the colonial powers that be. Just over 12 minutes long, PORTAL TOMB are on the front lines of the crust war, ready to dig into the trenches and fight back against the monotony and strife that weighs down our world.

The cassette tape is a beautiful collaboration between punk design legends Wilbur and Chris (of SoreMind). A printed cassette AND cassette case create a truly unique design, further enhanced by additional quotes on the j-card.

"The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."

I've had the pleasure of catching PORTAL TOMB live a few times now, every time tighter and louder than the last. If you get the chance to catch them live, dust off the butt flap, don the Deviated Instinct shirt and enjoy the ride.

Find the demo on bandcamp: https://portal-tomb.bandcamp.com/album/last-frost-demo

–Misery

STRAWMAN ARMY – Earthworks

STRAWMAN ARMY's first release was extremely hyped in my circles, probably due to some second-order social proximity between myself and the duo behind this recording-only project. The 2021 cassette Her Majesty's Ship OST was released on Stucco alongside egg-punk sounding bands with names like FROGMAN'S STICK OPERA and PILGRIM SCREW. It's—I don't know—a soundtrack for an apparently non-existent movie, complete

with a backstory about the movie's production hell and fake reviews from a film magazine? I have a (admittedly somewhat high) threshold for layers of indecipherable irony/pretension and performance-art type obfuscation, even when it seems like there is an underlying political thrust that would resonate with me (something about colonialism, I think). Her Majesty's Ship didn't pass and I slept on subsequent STRAWMAN ARMY releases assuming they were continuing in a similar art-punk egg-adjacent vein.

Two intervening LPs later, and STRAWMAN ARMY has released Earthworks. I know that I am not the only listener for whom Earthworks represented a breakthrough for STRAWMAN ARMY; this record is on a lot of 2024 top ten lists. Listening back to their other overlooked-by-me LPs Age of Exile and SOS, I see a clear progression across two related domains that explains the resounding appeal of Earthworks.

First, the experimentation in instrumentation and ambiance (both audio and conceptually) is gradually refined and targeted. Everything becomes less eggy. The artistic pretensions necessary for an idea like Her Majesty's Ship OST are slowly shed. The label-blurb-writeup for Earthworks touts the "jazz, ambient, and Krautrock" influences, but to me Earthworks

MISERY

TOP TEN PUNK RELEASES OF 2024 (IN NO ORDER)

- STRAW MAN ARMY – Earthworks
- STREET GLOVES – 2024 DEMO
- EXTENSIVE SLAUGHTER – A Fated Demise
- BEYOND STATE POWER – Demo 2024
- INDUSTRY – A Self Portrait At The Stage Of Totalitarian Domination Of All Aspects Of Life
- NORILLAG – The Union Of Death
- VERIFY – Hardcore Demo
- LOVE AND COMPASSION – ...Or Else
- PORTAL TOMB – Last Frost
- BLESS – Not For You EP

GHAS (A WORLD DIVIDED)

Top 10 Tracks

- FUERA DE SECTOR – Juegos Prohibidos
- NÃO – 1986
- GOLPE – Come Un Cappio / Mass Media / Cibernauti / Scenderemo Nelle Strade
- DIE IN VAIN – War Machine
- PAROL – Pit Stop
- LUMPEN – Anti-poder
- H.Ä.L.T. – lost (Version II)
- NADA! – Little Hole
- ALVILDLA – Moustique
- AYUCABA – Demo tour 2024

VANILSEJAY

- MEM//BRANE – Subcutaneous
- NO FUTURE – Mirror
- ECHTHROS – A Tooth For An Eye
- THE NOT – Demo

continued...

- RECALL – Demo
- STREET GLOVES – 2024 Demo
- HRT – Warm Wet Stroke Of Luck
- SCUMRAID – The End
- SUNROT//BODYVOID – Split
- LIFELESS DARK – Forces Of Nature's Transformation

RALPH RIVERA (THINK! FANZINE)

- ADVOIDS – Advoids 7" (Under The Gun)
- ANSWERING MACHINES – The Big Catch CS (Self Released)
- BLOOD NYMPH – Only a Mother Knows CS
- DIZTORT Live at Lot 49 (4/3/24)
- GABBY FLUKE – MOGUL & LILY FINNEGAN – Throw It in The Sink (Sonic Transmissions)
- NO KNOCK – No Knock 7" (Peace of Mind)
- ROLEX/GRIMLY FORMING – Split 12" (11pm)
- SHARP PINS – Radio RDR CS (Hallo Gallo/Perennial)
- TEXTURE FREQ – What May Come 7" (Dirt Cult)
- V/A – Peace of Mind in a Troubled World Compilation CS

AVA (PORTAL TOMB)

Top Ten (loosely ordered!)

- STRAW MAN ARMY – Earthworks
- LOVE AND COMPASSION – ...Or Else
- LIFE / DESTRUCT – To Stop The Conflict Split
- TERMINAL FILTH – Traces Towards Oblivion
- SAVAGE PLEASURE – Self Titled LP
- WITNESS – Demo
- MIRAGE – Legato Alla Rovina
- ARSON – Más Noize
- PAROXYS – Demo 2024
- SKEPTIS – Demonstrasi Oleh Skeptis

Honorable mention: FLOWER – Heel of the Next / Physical God cuz technically 2023!

REVIEWS

GAOLED – Bestial Hardcore

Do you like MIND ERASER? Do you like MIND ERASER's high-concept 2008 final LP Conscious/Unconscious? If you've never heard it I would say go give it a listen before continuing.

Conscious/Unconscious was the point at which MIND ERASER fully embraced their broader metal influences, in line with the trend of late 2000s powerviolence/hardcore bands breaking up so the members could start metal bands (see LIFELESS DARK who just dropped their long-awaited metalpunk thrash LP this week).

This debut LP from Perth's GOALED on Iron Lung is unmistakably in debt to Conscious/Unconscious. Dare I say, I hear some straight borrowed MIND ERASER riffs (and maybe a few baby-brother SCAPEGOAT riffs) all over this. Bestial Hardcore leans into the metal influence a little more, but the core of powerviolence-hardcore is strong throughout. I am not a fan of the heavily effect vocals. I guess a "bestial" entity might be coming at me from the bottom of a deep cave, but it doesn't really mesh well with the in-your-face-buzzsaw guitar tone. I want the vocals to be in my face too. Why are you hiding? That guitar tone is another deviation from the MIND ERASER recipe and it doesn't personally work for me either. I actually have a soft spot for that tone in other contexts but when you are trying to chug on PV sludge parts it just doesn't hit the same.

All that being said, the riffs are solid. I did enjoy this record, and despite the obvious influence that was hitting me over the head just like the dudes in the pit while MIND ERASER played Unconscious at Dude Fest in 2009, I still appreciated everything GOALED is bringing to the table.

Released on Iron Lung Records in the USA and Televised Suicide in Australia

Listen here: https://ironlungrecords.bandcamp.com/album/bestial-hardcore-lungs-287

—Martin Force

PORTAL TOMB – Last Frost

Behold the new dawn of stench...

It's not often a band that places itself so firmly in a well established subgenre of punk outshines it's predecessors. But the monolithic weight of the 3 tracks from PORTAL TOMB's first release might just be the best stenchcore this side of the pond has ever seen. Crusty, rumbling bass tones, sweeping guitar riffs and pummelling drums all accompanied by the

BONUS: COLOUR COVERS

Using colour paper for covers makes your zine table look extra enticing, and IMO it is well worth the extra effort. Some really fancy printers or copiers will even have a separate tray for cover paper, although mine doesn't, so here's how I do it:

Get some colour paper. I usually like to get multipacks of the brightest colours I can find (the Astrobrights ones are really nice). Watch out, some of those packs will have super dark colours like black or dark blue that you might not be able to print on in high-enough contrast, but maybe you can find another use for them (like making a cool PWYC sign with a whiteout pen?). Make sure you pay attention to the type of paper you're getting—if you're trying to be really fancy and want to make your zines more durable you can do deluxe cardstock covers (usually 65-lb.+ or "cover" weight), but ~24-lb. "text" paper is more economical (whether you're stealing or buying) cause you get more sheets in the same sized package. Some printers don't handle heavy-weight cardstock well, so also be mindful of that as it pertains to your personal setup.

You're going to be printing the first two pages of your zine PDF on the colour paper, aka one sheet front and back. In your print dialogue box, make sure the settings are the same as discussed above—double-sided, flipped on short edge, etc. Where it says "pages to print," instead of "all" we're going to select "pages" and fill in "1-2." If you are printing a zine where the inside front and back covers are blank (i.e. there is nothing on page 2 of your imposed zine PDF), you can just print page 1. Print one test copy to make sure that everything looks good, and then print as many copies of the cover as you're going to print copies of the zine. I like to count out the number of sheets of colour paper I'm going to need for the print run and load them into the feed tray so that I don't accidentally forget to switch back to white paper when the run is complete.

Next, the guts. Double check that your feed tray has white paper in it! Back in your print dialogue box, make sure all your settings are good (flip on short edge, etc). Under "pages to print" we're going to fill in "3-X", X being the last page of your PDF. Again, print one copy to make sure it works before you send the whole job with however many copies you're making, and keep an eye on the job as it's printing.

To assemble, simply lay a colour cover on top of the finished stack of guts and staple and fold like regular.

BORIS' 2024 TOP TEN

Hi Counterforce. After wanting and being offered to collaborate for several times I am finally pulling my weight to do this list. I'm Boris, I live in Montreal, I play in a band called TOTAL NADA and I'm part of the Noise Not Borders collective. Through NNB I co-host a monthly radio show called La Hora del Ruido in which I review and play new punk music from around the world. So I've been exposed to a lot of hardcore / punk music this year, because of the radio and traveling (mostly with the band), and I'm very happy to share this list with you.

I'm gonna explain how I made my decisions. I tried to choose music in the 3 different punk formats, LPs, EPs, and demos, also my top is heavily impacted by live performances. I also left out some obvious choices that might already have been reviewed by other contributors. Finally, I want to acknowledge there is so much HC punk out there and a short list is very biased, but please don't stop making music, playing shows and sharing your music with other people. You are a very important part of punk. Peace!

ALAMBRADA – Ríos de Sangre LP
On Unlawful Assembly. ALAMBRADA is a thrashy HC punk band from Bogotá, Colombia. Probably my favourite band to come out of my hometown after I moved away. Their first 7 inch totally blew my mind away in 2020. Thrashy as I feel some tints of thrashcore a la S.O.B and some riffs that remind me of NEGATIVE APPROACH, or (Hungarian) metal band DEMENTOR. At the beginning of the year I finally managed to catch ALAMBRADA live @ Festival Asfixia. One or the most violent sets I've probably seen in my life, my nose ring flew away from my face. Then managed to follow them around in some dates of their European tour around the with other Bogotá people rippers UNIDAD IDEOLÓGICA.

ARSON – Más Noize Demo
Arson are a band from New York. I caught them at Latino Punk fest this year. They play maniac d-beat with an innate energy, they are pretty much what you want to see in a band of the style, they're constant, raw and in the face. Their demo opens with a perfect track of just screams, then builds up into several amalgamations of the genre, cool drum fills and some mid tempo parts on the longer songs, and pure buzzsaw d-beat on the shorter ones. They are amazing live!

ASSISTERT SJØLMORD – Self Titled EP
This is an earworm of hardcore 7 inch. Thundering and galloping riffs, marching drums, great vocal delivery. Sounds at times like Modern Scandinavian hardcore– the AMDI PETERSEN ARME legacy, and at times like a uk82 bass driven pogo punk band. There's a very obvious similarity to THE COMES, and of fellow Norwegian classics KAFKA PROCESS, BANLYST or SVART FRAMTID. A perfect mutt for international hardcore lovers.

THE DARK – Sinking into Madness LP
This band was completely off my radar for a while and completely blew me away when I first listened to it. THE DARK is from Los Angeles, California and the record is released in Toxic State Records. I think it does because of its consistency, this is a 12 track LP, with songs on the verge of the two to four minutes, and has completely captivated my hardcore-centric attention deficit head. THE DARK play dark and metallic tinged punk, a mix of the (dark) Japanese sound, THE EXECUTE, MOLUGU, ZIGA, THE SEXUAL, but mixed with this very OC guitar style, think of every band that Rikk Agnew played guitar in.

INDUSTRY – A SELF PORTRAIT AT THE STAGE OF TOTALITARIAN DOMINATION OF ALL ASPECTS OF HUMAN LIFE LP
That title feels like a little bit of a review itself huh. Out on Static Age, Berlin's INDUSTRY came out of nowhere with this LP. INDUSTRY is composed of some veterans of their own scenes, from 4 corners of the world, San Francisco, England, Venezuela/ Barcelona, and Bogotá. Their sound is dark and materialistic, but with a very strong classic anarcho punk identity. Frenetic tribal drumming, hypnotic riffs, and a British accent that's not fake, lol. Their live energy is impressive, makes you wanna bounce up and down and shake your skeleton to the ground.

INNUENDO – Peace & Love LP
Unlawful Assembly/ Roachleg records coalition. INNUENDO play that intersection of hardcore and rock and roll that I'm a sucker for. Got spoiled by seeing them every night for a week in Colombia, and it generated to me this incredible feeling, when a band plugs itself and unleashes some crazy energy. On that tour, they got their LP and it had ants in it! I guess a fun reminiscence of our adventures in the tropics. Innuendo are great live, saw them for the last time at Skull Fest, now with a second guitar player, and they made the crowd erupt, heard from fellow show goers they were amongst the best bands of the skeleton island.

GUERRA FINAL – Purgatorio EP
Desolate Records. GUERRA FINAL is based in Texas. They play metallic hardcore with some rock n roll riffs, reminds me of the metallic hardcore kings, and kings of punk overall: POISON IDEA, but dissected to their Japanese hardcore influences, The BURNING SPIRIT kind, but with this twist of the Barcelona scene from the turn of the century, bands like GLAM, DESTINO FINAL, INVASION, OTAN, (believe they are named after a DESTRUCCIÓN song).

MANTIS – Demo
Metal infused hardcore punk featuring punks from Malmo and Copenhagen. Memorable riffs and militaristic drum rolls give the songs a VENOM-style drive, the vocals feel perfectly urgent. Definitely my favourite tape of the year. Caught them live @ Ungdomshuset in the summertime and they ended up their set blasting Leve Palestine, causing the whole crowd to cheer and dance creating an epic memory in my head.

PRISAO – EP # 2
Out on 11pm Records/Adult Crash. Straight forward Portuguese spoken hardcore from Stockholm, Sweden. It's a no fuck around hardcore punk EP that captures everything the genre should be. Short, direct in message and execution, catchy and have qualities to stomp you out.

VIDRO – Upp Till Dans
Last but not least reviewing this EP by Gothenburg HC punks VIDRO. Been a fan now for years, and they did it again. Raw, stripped, and energetic Hardcore music. VIDRO totally impresses me, it's a very classical band, but their execution is so perfect. This may sound like a contradiction, but despite saying they are very classic HC punk inspired they sound very contemporary. It's like THE HEADCLEANERS □, meets EXIT ORDER. It's a perfect jumping and dancing core. VIDRO has Swedish and Brazilian members. VIDRO is a word with a meaning in both languages, "glass" in one, and "an undesirable person" in the other one. Bands like this have their lore, VIDRO is the past and the future.

Don't be totally neurotic about it—it happens—but don't be sloppy or nihilistic about it either (especially if you're not paying for prints.)

Occasionally you will find a zine where the file seems OK and correct but actually it is laid out really fucked up and it won't print well despite your best efforts. The fixes for this are beyond the scope of this article and can involve enlisting the help of someone who knows how to use design software.

FINISHING

Finishing just means the stuff you do to the paper after it's done printing: for simple zines, it's usually just stapling and folding.

You can get away with not stapling or binding your zines if they're only 1–2 sheets of paper, but for anything with multiple sheets you really should do your readers or your future self a favour and attach the pages together in the right order.

A regular stapler won't really reach into the middle of a standard-sized zine, though many have tried to make it work by folding the cover to get it to fit in the stapler's mouth (but then your zine is kinda crumpled). Maybe this is fine for you. Otherwise, you need access to a long-arm stapler, which you might be able to check out at a library or makerspace, steal from an office supply store, or go in on purchasing with a few friends. I think they're like $30–40 these days.

You can crease the zines first to make sure you're stapling in the right place, or just set the stopper at 5.5" for standard half-Letter zines (or the total width of the paper divided by 2). Long-arm staplers can typically accommodate up to 25 sheets of paper with no issues.

Some people like to do other wild things like literally saddle-stitching the zines with a sewing machine or even throwing an elastic band around the middle. This is fine I guess but personally I staple.

Folding a lot of big zines can be rough on your hands. If you're fancy you can try to find a bookbinding tool called a bone folder that is made for creasing, but the butt end of a sharpie works basically just as well and it's really useful to have a sharpie in your distro kit anyways for stuff like making a sign that says "ZINES (A) P.W.Y.C." (the correct way to price your zines.)

Double sided printing + Flip on Short Edge

This is the big one that you have to remember for zine printing, which is why it's the name of this guide. When you select double-sided printing, usually "flip on long edge" is default, because that's how vertical/portrait ("hotdog style") regular ol' office doc printouts work. As a punk, you might use "flip on long edge" for stuff like double-sided handbill flyers or j-cards, but for zines we always "flip on short edge."

If you still have a hard time remembering which one it is, just grab a regular half-letter zine (you're holding one right now!) and look at it and think about how it is structured. You can even take the staples out and flatten it and try flipping the pages both ways to see which one makes sense. Pretty much any time I get myself twisted up about layout or settings, just grabbing a physical zine and looking at it immediately answers my questions, so I'd recommend this if you get stuck.

Collate

If your printer driver has a little checkbox that says "collate," definitely make sure it is CHECKED. If it is not checked and you print 50 copies of a zine, guess what, it's gonna print alllll the page 1s and then alllll the page 2s and so on and you'll have to assemble them yourself. It is a lot of work, very annoying. For some reason my home printer defaults to "don't collate" and it has bitten me in the ass more than once.

Greyscale

Are you paying for copies or ink? You might want to print in greyscale (black and white) cause it's cheaper. If you're scamming copies (good for you) then you don't need to worry about it.

Scale

Usually I print at 100% or "actual size," but depending on the zine file and the printer's margins, this may or may not cut off some content around the edges and you might have to scale down or choose "fit." Occasionally scaling down the zine can throw off the centre line, so you might have weirdness there. As with most things, just print and fold a test copy first to make sure everything is ok.

> **Note to people who make zines: most printers can't accommodate full bleed, so please don't put text all the way to the edge of the paper.**

Orientation

This usually defaults to portrait, and technically we are printing landscape, but I am gonna be honest: I basically never touch this setting and I don't think I've ever had a problem with it on any printer ever. If you print the first page of your zine and it's oriented the wrong way, I'd just change it and see what happens.

> **Always print one copy before you print a bunch of copies! Check your prints throughout the print job, don't just hit print and walk away.**

Fucked up zines prints are a huge bummer cause they're usually double-sided so you can't even reuse the back for scrap paper. If you are patient and careful and get in the habit of checking your settings well, you'll avoid a lot of unnecessary paper waste, although some amount of waste is pretty much inevitable when printing at quantity.

Wanted to finish up name dropping some other releases I enjoyed this year. PURA MANÍA 7", EJACULATORS Demo, STRAW MAN ARMY LP, S.H.I.T. LP, LOVE AND COMPASSION Demo, NECRON 9 Tape, MIRAGE LP and 7", RIXE 7", IGNORANCE 7", NO TIME LP, EXO Tape, DÁVILA 666 EP, INVERTEBRATES EP.

Thank you all for reading

2024 TOP TEN AS TOLD BY TAY (OF TAZ)

(in no particular order)

I hate the notion that as you age in a youth subculture it becomes more and more difficult to keep up with what is "new" and "happening". I like to consider myself relatively still tapped in but as if to call my bluff I was asked to contribute to this top tens portion of this publication. Here goes nothing!!

Demos/ Eps/Tapes:

- WITNESS – Demo
- STREET GLOVES – 2024 Demo
- EXO – Demo
- PURA MANIA – Extranos Casos De La Vida Real
- LOVE & COMPASSION – ...or else
- TOTAL CON – Kill Someone You Hate
- BEYOND STATE POWER – Demo
- ALERTTO DE LAFOSA – Vicious Circles Vol.1 Promo Cassette
- DEMENTAR – Enchanted forest
- DECEPT – Ouroboros
- CICADA – True Self Destruction
- KŪKA'ILIMOKU / HAKKAPELIITTA — Kūkahakka'ilipeliimokutta (Split Cassette)

LPs

- SUBDUED – Abattoir
- STRAW MAN ARMY – Earthworks
- THE DARK – Sinking into madness
- TZOMPANTLI – Beating the Drums of Ancestral Forces
- DREW MCDOWALL – A Thread, Silver and Trembling
- PUBLIC ACID – Deadly Struggle
- INVERTEBRATES – Sick to Survive
- FUNERAL LEECH – The Illusion of Time

continued...

- PEACE DE RÉSISTANCE – Lullaby For the Debris
- FAZE – Big Upsetter

Shows / Sets

- CHUQUIMAMANI–CONDORI @ a church in queens @ 1am on Jan 1st 2024
- LEBENDEN TOTEN + BOG PEOPLE + FRENZY @ Boxing Ring in Brooklyn
- THREE 6 MAFIA @ Shitty huge venue that's not worth mentioning
- NEGATIVE PLANE + GRAVE MIASMA + IMPURE @ TV Eye
- INVERTEBRATES @ Unlawful Assembly
- THE DARK @ Trans Pecos
- QUEST MASTER + PUTRID MARSH @ TV Eye
- SEXPILL + SURPRISE DRESS CODE @ TV Eye
- T.S.S BRADLEY @ Empty Bottle
- SNIPER CULTURE + PUBLIC ACID + FRIED REALITY + CICADA @ Empty Bottle
- LOVE & COMPASSION @ Bootleg Bar after park show got shut down

CORN TOP 10 SETS OF 2024

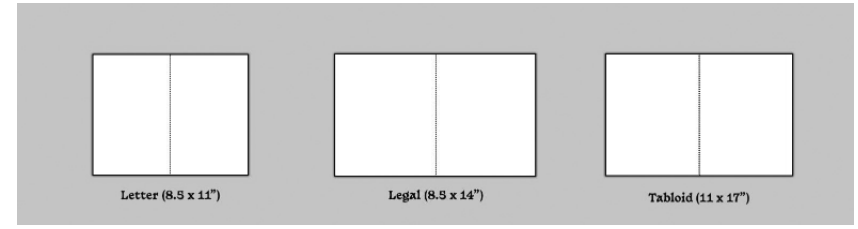
(technically 11 artists but c'mon)

THE MALL (BOTH SETS)
the first thing I saw this year was a bunch of taggers beat up some shithead in the parking lot, rip the pockets off his jeans, and then make him leave sans left shoe. the second thing was THE MALL's transportive, apocalyptic dance punk. both of these things set the stage for how fucked AND fun this year would be. also, their COCK SPARRER cover at the end of Dirty World to a collection of late night lifers will be a moment i'll never forget, thanks Mark <3

PUNITIVE DAMAGE
another show at Batiment 7/Tapage, setting a theme for the list going forward. i was not paying attention to this band at all when I went to this one, it's always a good feeling to be surprised at this point. rock–solid catchy and political hardcore, wish Vancouver didn't feel like Antarctica distance wise so I could see them again sooner

GAZM and CELL (FINAL/REUNION SHOWS)
i'd need a lot more time or space to talk about seeing GAZM and CELL again for what could be their last shows, but it feels special that both happened this year. both bands define a beginning of distinct shift in what Montreal HC was, and I feel extremely lucky to have been there for all of it. both shows were insanely wild energy, affirmative to old friends and what we've done, and most importantly the sets were incredibly vital, small h hardcore forever

dimensions, you might just be able to tell the format by looking at the file, or com–paring it to the illustration below, where all the formats are scaled to the same height. If you still can't tell, you might be able to open up the first page of the file in image editing software and try to figure out the size.



PRINTING

Ok, now that we have the right kind of files and the right kind of paper for our files, let's print. Depending on the printer and the operating system of your computer (or pho–tocopier) it's gonna look really different, but there are a few settings that you should double check in your print dialogue before you send the job.

Example of a print dialogue in Adobe Acrobat on a Mac. Notice that collate is checked, grayscale printing is checked, we're at "actual size" aka 100%, print on both sides of paper and flip on short edge are selected.

The subsequent pages of the file will have page 3, 4, 5, etc, of the zine alternating between the left and right side of the page. Finally, the last page of the file should have two consecutive pages, (e.g. zine page 4 / zine page 5) and it should be the only file page where this is the case. If there aren't page numbers (silently curse the designer), you can check if the content between these two zine pages flows seamlessly—maybe there's even a cool centerfold illustration, or if there is text it should continue from the left side to the right side of the file page.

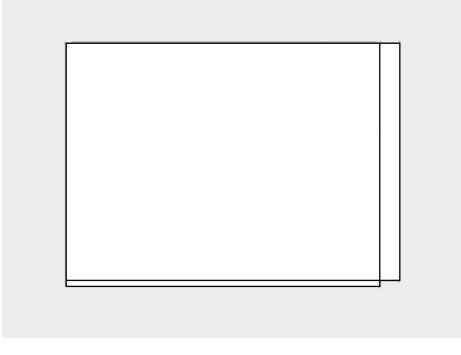
Note for the aspiring D.I.Y. scissor-and-gluestick types: this is also the template for laying out a zine that you can photocopy, OR you can scan it and submit it to the Counterforce Zine Page so people in other places can print it!

If you open a file and ONLY see the front cover, and if all of the inside pages have two zine pages and content that flows from one page to the next (if there are numbers they go up sequentially), this file is not formatted for saddle-stitch printing and binding. You gotta either find the imposed version or do it yourself, which is a whole thing.

If you open a file and find a long line of single, sequentially-ordered pages, you MIGHT be able to print this zine using a setting called booklet printing. If your print dialogue has this setting you can give it a shot—your print dialogue box might even have a little preview window where you can click through the pages and see if it is all lining up correctly. I don't usually mess around with booklet printing, but it can work as long as the number of pages is a multiple of 4.

PAPER SIZE

I'm writing this from Canada, where Letter (8.5 x 11") is the most common paper size and zine format size. Outside of North America and the Philippines, the most common paper size is called A4 (side note, I highly recommend checking out the Wikipedia page on Paper size.) I'm going to refer to North American paper sizes (Letter, Legal and Tabloid/Ledger) because that's what I'm familiar with, but a lot of the conceptual info in this guide can apply to zines laid out for A4. While the sizes are roughly similar, A4 and Letter are NOT the same height to width ratio and NOT easily interchangeable. I don't recommend trying to print A4 zines on Letter paper or vice versa. It doesn't look good and you'll probably have weird margins and too-small text, but if you or your readership have a high tolerance for those things or you're really desperate I guess do what you gotta do.



A4 and Letter... seems like a small difference, but it adds up.

Sometimes you will find Legal (8.5 x 14") or even Tabloid or Ledger (11 x 17") zines. Most home and office printers can accommodate up to Legal size, since it's the same width as Letter. Tabloid/Ledger is more rare in home printers, but your copy shop can almost certainly do it. Make sure the paper you're printing on matches the size of the file. If you're familiar with paper sizes or have a good eye for

BELGRADO
more the show than necessarily the band, although I have loved their songs. the show was pouring rain, so humid and packed, but technical difficulties and someone pissing in the corner did zero to dampen the energy as Sasha handed out sparklers and we fanned ourselves with ripped up beer boxes through the 37 degree weather inside, perfect night

LAUGHING (ALBUM RELEASE)
truly one of my favourite bands in the city. seeing them play their entire album of summer power-pop classics and break-up anthems front to back in packed-out Casa was a true tearjerker, fun, gentle and so catchy. also Plateau/Mile End had a night-long blackout right after the set, so i'll always associate this one with wandering up and down St-Laurent as bleary people piled out of bars, me staring at car headlights and thinking about throwing a brick through a window

SLASH NEED (ALL 4 TIMES)
as i've been saying, if you saw a SLASH NEED show and didn't love it, that's completely on you. there are few projects that put so much into the live performance, it's never boring and always feels like everyone's honing into something hedonistic in the pure sense

MIRAGE
their set for Noise Not Borders this year was a masterclass in elevation, just kept speeding up, building, twisting, as the crowd got more and more incensed and spontaneously revived the circle pit, which is something i hope we as a city carry with us into the new year. maybe it's just me getting back into Italian HC in a big way again, but i was just deeply impressed

INNUENDO
i saw a lot of great sets at Skullfest (see my scene report here or in THE COUNTERFORCE print issue #3), but it felt weird to give a ton of slots to bands packed into such a short time and heightened atmosphere (plus 11 bands is already pushing it). but yeah it's INNUENDO. They're stripped-down, pissed off, 80's style Midwest hardcore that's also impossible to mistake as anything other than the band of Right Now, never dropping the furious energy for a second

FLASH
i had a friend who rarely gets super into punk shit rave to me about how good FLASH was in Chicago, so i was already primed for this one, but they truly overdelivered. captured that catchy classic punk, fantastic guitar leads and perfect control of rhythm without surrendering an inch to the bloat of marketable and playlistable "rock'n'roll"

HANK WOOD AND THE HAMMERHEADS
what can i say, i'm a deeply nostalgic person. but! i swear it's not just that i was 22 when Go Home came out! this show was ecstatic in the truest sense, a sea of people losing their shit in a concrete box, a perfect series of riffs, organ runs and slogans to shout at strangers on the street, fireworks and beer cans. it's not complicated, it's not a surprise inclusion, but hardcore punk is stupid as hell and it's the only thing that matters

TAYLOR JOY'S 2024 TOP TEN

My favourite releases of this year trended crustier with earnest and anarchist lyrics, railing against the capitalist war machine and the capture of corporate technology... consider me re-enlisted for the crust war. Here's what stuck with me this year, and what I want more of in 2025. In some nebulous order:

LIFELESS DARK – Forces of Nature's Transformation
About fuckin' time... this record is everything I hoped it would be. Like slipping into a warm bath.

YELLOWCAKE – Can You See The Future?
I listened to this on repeat when I found it this fall. Well-executed dbeat, enough variation delivered via noise and breakdowns to keep it interesting, incredible vocals.

LOVE AND COMPASSION – ...Or Else
I made vegan pancakes at least 30 times while listening to this tape this year... officially the most-played-cassette on our kitchen boombox in 2024.

PORTAL TOMB – Last Frost Demo
Stellar debut release from one of my favourite current local (Montreal) bands, in a beautiful and instantly-sold-out cassette.

FLOWER — HEEL OF THE NEXT / PHYSICAL GOD
Technically 2023? Barely... this counts. FLOWER are perfect.

S.H.I.T. – For A Better World
Could this LP have been a 7"? Anyways, S.H.I.T. shits gold.

NO FUTURE – Mirror
Like being wrapped up in layered blankets of loud noise and lead by the hand through a maze of perfectly-executed tempo changes.

STRAW MAN ARMY – Earthworks
I'm really surprised by how much I liked this, really not my usual thing but for some reason I am 100% on board. CRASS for the 2020s.

MURO – Nuevo Dogma
Physical-only release from a band like this gets big style points.

DEMONSTRATE – Demonstration 2024
My list is light on hardcore this year because most of it didn't stick with me and a lot sounds like overproduced garbage that was engineered to win Spotify metrics. This sounds like shit (good) and makes me want to jump around. XXX

CRIMETHINC'S TOP 10 PUNK MOVIES WE WATCHED IN 2024

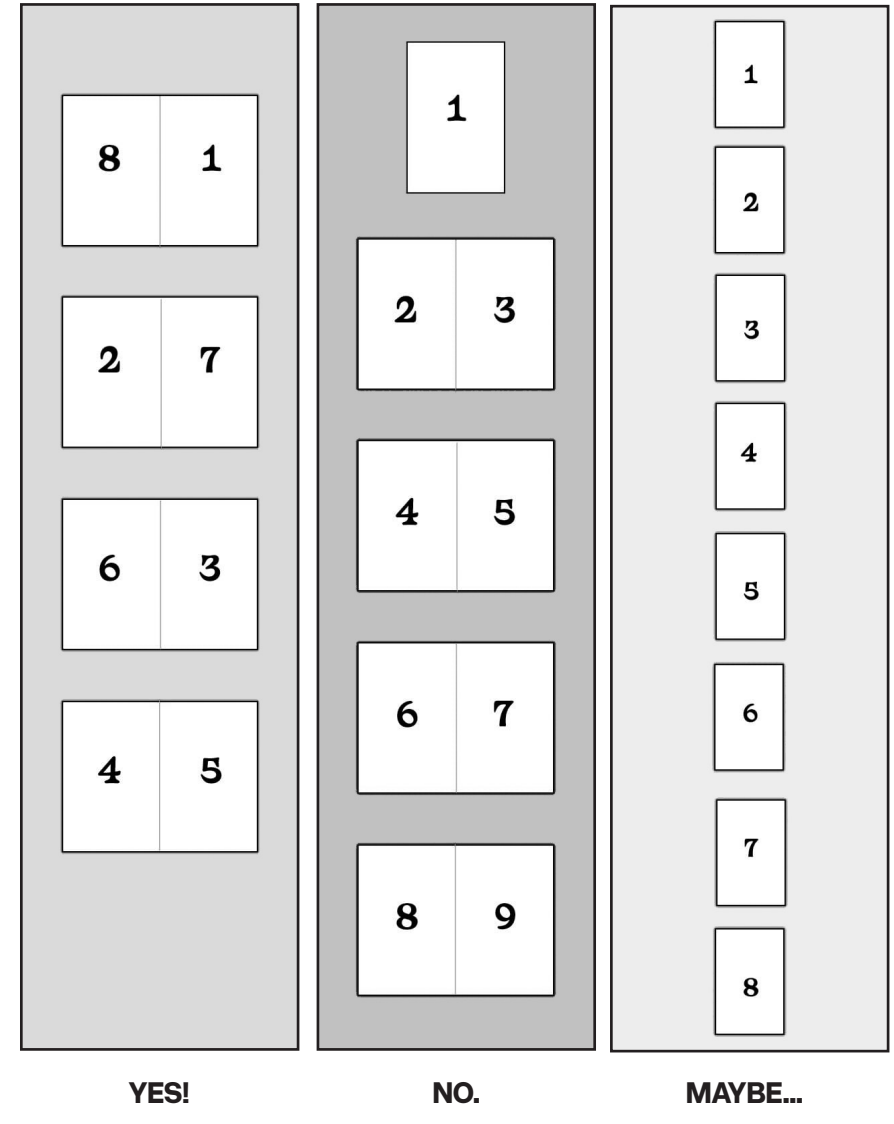
Can't get out of bed because you woke up drunk and your back hurts from too much pogo? Or maybe you're about to host a rock'n'roll benefit for Palestine and need some cool retro reels to project behind the bands... whatever the occasion, we are pleased to bring you the CrimethInc. Ex-Worker Podcast's year-end top 10 punk films we watched in 2024.

The next page of the file should have zine page 2 on the left side and the second-to-last page of the zine on the right side.

This is the point at which you may silently thank or curse the person who made the zine for including or excluding page numbers.

Note to people who make zines: INCLUDE PAGE NUMBERS.

Can you print that zine? What does your PDF file look like?



FLIP ON SHORT EDGE: A Punk's Guide to Printing Zines

by Taylor Joy

So you want to print some zines (like this one) to distribute at a punk show or other event, or to just give out to your friends. Sick! If you are new to printing or copying zines or just need a refresher, and want to avoid frustration and wasted paper, this guide is for you.

This guide will mostly cover standard, Letter-sized-paper-folded-in-half-and-stapled style zines aka "saddle stitch" (again, like this one). This is the most common type of zine you'll encounter for DIY printing. We'll go over how to look at files and make sure you've got the right ones to print, choosing paper, printer dialogue settings and some tips on finishing such as folding and stapling. Effectively we're taking a two-dimensional file on a computer and turning it into a three-dimensional, interactive object, so there's a little bit of thinking and spatial reasoning involved, but don't worry you'll be fine.

To follow these instructions, you'll need access to a printer or copier which has duplexing, or double-sided printing, which most modern printers do. Printing zines on a one-sided printer or copier is a great punk tradition but getting the sides to line up is some galaxy-brain shit, and while this guide might help you start to wrap your head around how that works, I'm not going to explain exactly how to do it.

If you have any feedback on this guide you can contact The Counterforce, or if you think I did a bad job explaining this you can write and submit your own guide.

THE FILES

Zine files are typically in .pdf format. Sometimes you'll find one in an image format like jpeg/.jpg or tiff/.tif. Most of this info in this article will still be conceptually relevant to those kinds of files, but you might run into some other problems with printing, so it's best to find .pdfs.

Sometimes, there will be multiple versions of a particular zine. For printing, the file name will usually have the word "print" or "imposed" in it, as opposed to "read" or "screen," which will typically not print correctly because they are formatted for reading on a screen.

Imposed just means that the file is laid out in a way where when you print it out and fold it in half, all the zine pages will be in the correct order and orientation. When you open the PDF in a program like Preview or Acrobat or in a web browser, it will seem like the pages are in a totally fucked order. But I promise there is a logic to it! The first thing you should see is a landscape ("hamburger style") file page with two pages of the zine: the back cover (last page of zine) on the left side and the cover (zine page 1) on the right side.

Note on language: this can get a bit confusing to talk about because there are two pages of the zine on each page of the .pdf file. In this guide I'm using "zine page" to mean each 5.5 x 8.5" page of the zine, and "file page" to indicate each 8.5 x 11" page of the .pdf file.

In addition to consuming dozens of hours of punks on screen, we made our own film this year. **Fell In Love With Fire** is a full length documentary about the six months of anarchy and chaos that reigned over Chile after triumphant rioters took control of the streets. Check it out!

10. Good Vibrations [2012]

A true story, and the name says it all. At the height of The Troubles, Terri Hooley—an indomitably idealistic reggae lover—opens up a record store in the middle of Belfast's bombed out city center. The scene of rebel rockers that crops up around the shop doesn't fit into any of the social or political binaries of its environment. As Joe Strummer put it,

"Between the bombing and shootings, the religious hatred and the settling of old scores, [Belfast] punk gave everybody a chance to LIVE for one glorious, burning moment."

John Peel plays THE UNDERTONES' "Teenage Kicks" on the BBC, and its sonice he plays it twice.

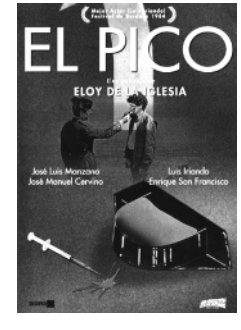
Royal Ulster Constabulary pigs are confounded when they pull over RUDI and THE OUTCASTS' tour van to find a mix of Protestant and Catholic kids.

At a big-occasion, beyond-capacity benefit show to save the Good Vibrations record store, the shop's accountant confronts Hooley because his NOTAFLOF guest list has resulted in financial loss. "The whole point of tonight was to raise money for your shop."

Terri looks out over the crowd of kids singing along with arms over each other. "No, it wasn't, not the whole point. Money couldn't buy what we've just done."

I've always felt like stories that begin before punk existed and show its genesis are particularly well-poised to capture its spirit, and this film does a good job of showing how DIY gave punk its power from the very beginning.

A feel-good flick you could watch with your fucking grandmother.



9. El Pico [1983]

Gritty, grey, and morally ambiguous. NOT a feel-good flick.

Just a few years after the fall of Franco, the teenage son of a fascist police captain befriends his opposite number, the son of a left-wing politician in the Basque Country of Spain. However, the friendship isn't based in a love of punk or any of the wholesome idealism found in Good Vibrations. The pair lie, steal, and kill in pursuit of their accelerating heroin addiction.

Be warned—the syringe shots are slow, intense, and sleazily seductive. A "police kill and torture" banner at a city-wide street festival gives you a sense of the social force that the Basque freedom struggle commanded during the film's era. There's an artsy gay sex pad and a ménage à trois in the gorgeous, groovy mod apartment of a beautiful Argentinean dope queen. A

public park tagged up with ETA graffiti hosts a gaggle of Bilbao punks all hanging out, including one of the dudes from ESKORBUTO.

El Pico is representative of the Cine Quinqui ("kinky") genre of raw films about derelict Spanish street youth from the 70s and 80s.

8. Never Mind The Baubles – Christmas '77 with The Sex Pistols [2013]

In 1977, SEX PISTOLS were a forbidden band, literally. "God Save the Queen" was banned by the BBC (making it the most censored record in British history), the band was forced to tour under a fake name to avoid cancellation, and its members were regularly targeted on the street and beaten up for being punk. In spite of the hardships, the Pistols set out on a "Never Mind the Bans" tour of Britain in December 1977. The last show of the tour was in Huddersfield, where they played a Christmas Day ball for the children of striking firemen and miners. The tour would turn out to be the PISTOLS' final performances in the UK.

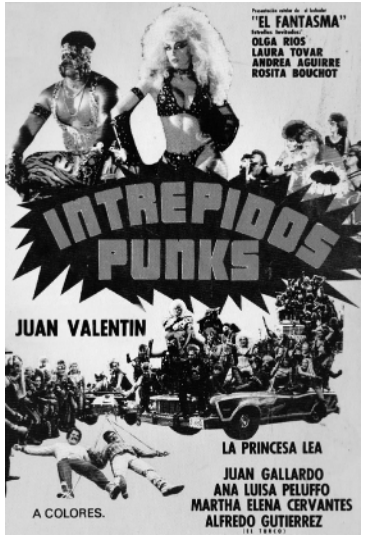
The shots of a blank-stared, spikey Sid Vicious banging out the bass in front of jumping, smiling children is priceless.

As with countless more of his endeavors, Malcolm McLaren was a fucking genius for putting this together.

7. Intrépidos Punks [1988]

A gang of cave punks live up in the hills, only descending into town to rob, kill, and accost.

Purely aesthetic motorpunk eyecandy, much like...



DON'T GIVE UP

Stay strong! Don't be discouraged if you aren't keeping everything. GR is not a book to skim, it's important to read every word. But don't worry if you don't understand every word. Just enjoy the ride, or the "vibes" and stick with it. I usually tell people to at least try and make it to when Slothrop goes down the toilet at which point you can't really deny that you are at least reading something interesting.

Even if you lose steam and stop, don't be afraid to pick GR back up and try again. Re-listen to a podcast episode or re-read the last few Episode summaries and then dive back in. No one gets everything the first time, and one of the joys of the book is discovering new things every time you re-read it (if you ever choose to). GR certainly doesn't deliver a satisfying first-order narrative conclusion, but it is worth getting through. There are still great payoffs that deliver (and you'll probably catch more of them with help from these guides. And undeniably some of the best parts of the book appear closer to the end. How could you stop before Byron the Bulb!

Good luck!

Links

All these links are accessible on the online version of this article at the-counterforce.org

- John Semley's *Gravity's Rainbow* Guide https://www.gravitysrainbowguide.com
- Slow Learners podcast https://podbay.fm/p/slow-learners
- *Gravity's Rainbow* Wiki https://gravitys-rainbow.pynchonwiki.com
- "Join in the Counterforce: Thomas Pynchon's postmodern epic *Gravity's Rainbow* at 50" by Julien Murphet — https://theconversation.com/join-the-counterforce-thomas-pynchons-postmodern-epic-gravitys-rainbow-at-50-196657
- "We're All Living Under *Gravity's Rainbow*" by John Semley — https://www.wired.com/story/living-under-gravitys-rainbow-thomas-pynchon/
- Spermatikos Logos, kind of the wackiest online repository of Pynchon stuff I've seen lately — https://shipwrecklibrary.com/the-modern-word/pynchon/spermatikos-logos/

Who is speaking? It can sometimes be difficult for the reader to track who is narrating a scene, as Pynchon will frequently and subtly shift between i) narration by an external, impersonal narrator, of which there are several distinguishable by their tone of voice and their treatment of the subject; ii) narration from the POV of a given character, achieved either by colouring the narrative with the character's 'voice'—adopting vocabulary, idiomatic tics etc.—or by narrating one of the character's passing memories or fantasies, usually with an accompanying change of narrative voice; and iii) dialogue—often attributed but, when unattributed, so clearly demarcated thanks to Pynchon's mastery of accent and dialogue that the identity of the speakers is rarely in doubt.

Where and when is the narrated action taking place and how the hell did we get here from where we just were? Many of the switches of narrator/perspective involve switching into alternative contexts, contexts from which we usually emerge back into the previous one. In particular, the switch from external to internal narrative often starts off by moving from an outside view to the perspective of the chosen character on the current scene. But it is usually effected in order to switch into that character's memories or fantasies which often belong to a totally different time and place to the enclosing narrative. So, at first it appears that the book is chock full of sudden and arbitrary jumps in chronology and location interlarded with strange song and dance numbers or bouts of weird sex or whatever. But these peculiar and confusing sequences are for the most part merely intrusions from the psyches of the characters into a relatively conventionally plotted story.

The step down into a character's memories can often run to several pages or even whole sections of narrative and this may itself involve recursive descents into the memories or fantasies of characters in the embedded scene. Sometimes all this rich exposition may underline and explain a single line of dialogue or a passing thought of the character in the enclosing narrative. The material presented may also serve to help the reader comprehend later (and occasionally earlier) developments. Bear in mind then that GR is a hierarchy of narratives, rather like a hypertext in which a given line or paragraph at one level in the narrative can suddenly open up into a whole section of underlying expository narrative. Be prepared to switch to and fro from one scene to another at the drop of an allusion but expect also to find a coherent trail linking each such scene to a global narrative."

Here is an example of these narrative shifts within a single Episode broken down in Wiesenburger's Companion:

Again in part 1, episode 14 is a much more complex variant on this cyclical pattern. It opens at Pirate Prentice's London maisonette with Katje Borgesius standing before the lens of Osbie Feel's movie camera; the first analepsis, focalized through Katje, discloses Blicero, Gottfried, and Katje at the rocket battery in Holland; the second, focalized now through Blicero, takes us to South-West Africa during the Herero insurrection of 1922; we return momentarily to the second-order time (at the Holland rocket battery) in order to begin a third analepsis, this time focalized through one of Katje's seventeenth-century ancestors, Frans van der Groov, on the island of Mauritius; and the narration ends by cycling readers back to the original base time, with Katje standing before the camera eye.

Just being aware that this is a big part of Pynchon's style—and that you should watch out for it when you are starting to feel lost—can help a lot.

6. Crazy Thunder Road [1980]

Written and directed by Gakuryū Ishii, Crazy Thunder Road is the film school precursor to his widely acclaimed motorpunk epic Burst City. Like Burst City, Crazy Thunder Road is more of a frantic, chaotic opera of leather and chains than much of a compelling narrative, but there is more of a storyline than Intrépidos Punks.

The film centers around Jin, the leader of a biker gang who are, even by the standards of the other biker gangs featured, totally out of control. It takes the discipline of a right-wing paramilitary group to break the gang... but only briefly, until Jin declares war on the rival biker gangs and nationalist forces alike.

As in Penelope Spheeris' Suburbia, Ishii got real life bikers to act in the film's roles.

"Every day, my assistant would go into town to find bikers to appear in the film. Usually, even if they had agreed, they wouldn't show up on set because they had been arrested by the cops in the meantime." —Gakuryū Ishii

The best scene is a long, unbroken shot of Jin, grumbling motor sounds with the distant, deranged stare of a madman in his eyes. The shot pans out to reveal both of Jin's arms in casts, reducing him to self-simulate the thrill of the open road.

Crazy Thunder Road provides perfect action-packed, chaotic background reel for a party, bar, or show. Trying to follow the storyline, however, may leave you with the whiplash of a high-velocity motorcycle accident.

5. Smithereens [1982]

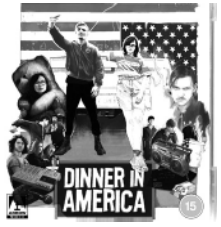
One of the few early punk films out there with a female protagonist and a compelling plot.

Smithereens captures the fashion and general grittiness of early New York punk rock, with breathtaking scenes of urban decay on par with Sid & Nancy or Style Wars.

Wren, a runaway from New Jersey, hitches her star to a one-hit wonder rocker played by Richard Hell, who entices her to travel across the country to Los Angeles, where the promise of New York's waning punk scene is supposed to be more rockfully fulfilled. Throughout the film, the characters narcissistically use each other in varying degrees of

parasitic relationships, a dynamic of early New York punk that will be familiar to anyone who has read Please Kill Me.

The urban vanlife scenes fill me with aspirations for an American punk "wagenplatz" community, even though the vanlifer in Smithereens is just a solo maverick parked in the middle of a failed urban industrial desert.

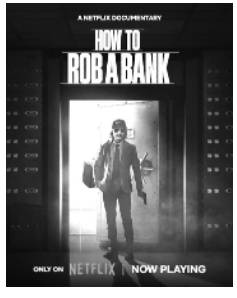


4. Dinner in America [2020]

Patty, an unrespected, unremarkable suburban loser dork escapes the oppressive ordinariness of home by burying her ears into headphones and masturbating while blasting the demo of PSYOPS, a local punk band shrouded in mystery.

One day, on a break from work, an on-the-lam punk uses Patty to evade police capture and convinces her to take him home for dinner, where he persuades Patty's parents to let him stay a while... and her whole life falls into place.

I don't want to give away too much because it was a true pleasure watching this film unfold. If you can get over the unneeded, gratuitous use of homophobic slurs, this movie rocks.



3. How to Rob a Bank [2024]

"This is real. This is a robbery. Step away from your cages."

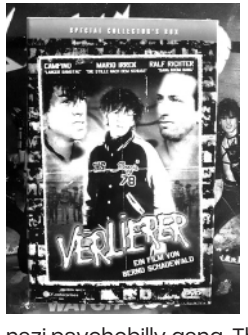
The best documentary you'll see for years. From 1992 to 1996, the Hollywood Bandit committed 19 known bank robberies in Seattle. He used the money to finance his off-the-grid Ewok village, fund Earth First! forest defense campaigns, and travel the world in an existential pursuit of his Self.

A confession: I actually re-watched this one determined to fit it into the top 10, convinced that there must have been some mention of the grunge scene that would qualify it as a punk-adjacent film. Sure enough, a bizarre interview has a square-as-fuck FBI agent describing Seattle's nascent grunge scene, while one of the Hollywood Bandit's friends

explains the scene's anti-establishment and anti-corporate ethos. However, what makes this movie punk isn't the brief history of grunge; it's the uncompromising individualism, the balls-to-the-wall adventure as a way of life, and its decadent anti-materialism.

With 2024's upswing in armed attempts on those in power, I'd tell you to take inspiration from this film... but it's just impossible not to.

WATCH. THIS. MOVIE.



2. Verlierer [1987]

Not a happy story.

Two motor-rocker gangs, the Getto Sharks and the Rats, achieve a fragile truce over the urban industrial waste-land they cruise through. The younger brother of the Getto Sharks' leader wants in, but the older brother doesn't want to see him falling down the path of gang life. On a fateful night, after his drunken father kicks him out, the younger

brother joins with a Rat who is being hunted by a xenophobic nazi psychobilly gang. The two strike up a heartening friendship, until the younger brother discovers his new compatriot's membership in the rival Rats.

after you read, and *Bleeding Edge* is his most recent book— it's set in NYC in 2001, so the setting and context is way more familiar and accessible to most contemporary readers than the World War II of GR.

COMPANIONS

There are more companions and reading guides for GR than ever. I think it is a book that gets assigned in university English lit maybe? So there are academic study guides and summaries for sure, but I have never looked at any of those. I suggest John Semley's *Gravity's Rainbow* Guide (https://gravitysrainbowguide.com) which provides a short, readable summary of each Episode to help you easily follow the "plot" of the novel an stay grounded. John also co-hosts a 12-or-so episode podcast called *Slow Learners*, the first season of which is designed to be listened to while reading GR. Each podcast episode covers a chunk of the book, and the hosts go over "what happened," discuss the reading and the themes so far, and conduct an interview with some kind of smart person. The podcast isn't brilliant (it's just two dudes talking), but it's also not overly academic or pedantic. Even if you don't love it, the structure and clarifying summaries will likely help you get a lot out of the book, especially on the first read-through. It'll also point out the major themes and provide the context of the book: the world it was released into and where Pynchon was coming from in writing it (as far as anyone knows—he is notoriously reclusive and mysterious). So, I recommend reading along with the website and listing along with the podcast as you go, at a bare minimum!

There is also the classic *Gravity's Rainbow* Wiki which has tons of page-by-page annotations and an alphabetical index, all contributed by Pynchon nerds. Unless you have the correct paper edition, it's hard to look up annotations for a specific page on the fly, but you can try reading along in the Wiki as you go. I find the alphabetical index more helpful—for example, for looking up a character by name when they reappear after a 400-page absence and you need to be reminded who the fuck they are.

I've also read along with the 2nd edition of *A Gravity's Rainbow Companion* by Steven Weisenburger (a physical book, but online here, or find a PDF at the usual places). I don't really recommend this for a first read through, especially if you are listening to the podcast and following along on John's *Gravity's Rainbow* Guide website. Weisenburger includes really detailed and obtuse annotations, with lots of speculation about Pynchon's sources and deep background. It's great if you want to nerd out hard, but probably a distraction otherwise. There are short summaries for each Episode, but even those are kind of vague.

WTF IS GOING ON

One thing that I did get from Weisenberger's *Companion* is a heightened awareness of how Pynchon shifts the narrative point of view. Weinsenberger calls these narrative shifts analepsis and they are big part of what makes Pynchon's writing dense or confusing. A chapter will start following a particular character, who will be reminded of something. Then we dive into the memory, and then a character in the memory mentions an ancestor, and then we follow the ancestor's story for 20 pages before going in reverse, inception-style, back to the POV where we started. Here is a long but helpful description of this taken from an online "Pynchon Newbies" guide:

I don't want to be another one of those dudes who punishes you about *Gravity's Rainbow.* This "review" is for many of friends who've expressed interest in reading *Gravity's Rainbow* and just want my advice on how to tackle it. I recently read it for the third time, and I've checked out some of the newer and older reading companions that exist. So at this point I hopefully have some useful advice. If you are curious and want a bit more of a pitch, here are two recent reviews/articles that came out for the 50th anniversary of GR's publication [just search the title, or links at the end of the article]:

- **"Join in the Counterforce: Thomas Pynchon's postmodern epic *Gravity's Rainbow* at 50" by Julien Murphet — The Conversation, February 27, 2023**
- **"We're All Living Under *Gravity's Rainbow*" by John Semley — Wired, February 16, 2023**

Or, just ask any of your punk friends who you suspect are into Pynchon. Odds are you know at least one and you can get a personalized pitch (or be punished...). I will finally say that, after re-reading both recently, I actually think *Against The Day* (2006) is my favorite Pynchon book. But because of it's infamy and place in "literature," GR has far more resources and writing about it, so it might still be easier to recommend (it's also shorter, but that isn't saying much).

STAY IN THE ZONE

Gravity's Rainbow is long and challenging. If you don't currently have a regular book-reading habit and you just try to dive right into the deep end, there's a good chance you'll drown. You've gotta approach a book like this intentionally and with a plan. You need to be confident you'll be able to read regularly, and keep it up long enough to finish the book (how long depends on how much you read each day). Reading GR is quite immersive. It isn't essential to have a tight handle on everything, but I think you if you spent too much time away, you'll have trouble keeping track of how everything fits together, and spend more time trying to remember than enjoying the reading.

If you are out of practice reading, I suggest getting warmed up with an easy page-turner, or maybe one of Pynchon's easier books (see below). I usually read before bed, but this isn't a book where that works for me at all. To re-read GR this time, I needed to get back into the habit of reading at breakfast and in the afternoon at least every other day. Which is a habit I like to have in my life anyways!

I also went on a monthlong tour in the middle of my most recent reading, thinking I would keep reading while on tour (didn't happen). The extended break made it hard for me to pick GR up again and finish. So I suggest planning to read GR when you know you'll have the time ahead of you, whether that's when you'll be on vacation, or have a long winter ahead, or if you just finished school.

PRE-READ

If you want some warm-up reads, or just wanna try reading Pynchon without starting with the "hardest one," he has other excellent books that are easier and shorter. Punks love the aforementioned *The Crying of Lot 49*—it's short and funny and way less dense. His later books *Inherent Vice* (2009) and *Bleeding Edge* (2013) are also shorter and more accessible. Inherent Vice even has a good movie you can watch before/

This movie is evenly weighed on both of the scales I have been rating this top 10 with: plot and aesthetic. While the Rats are solidly heavy metal rockers, the Getto Sharks have punks, skins, and biker-looking members, affording a sense of authenticity to the gang aspect of the film: it's not about what scene you're in exactly, it's about how hard

you roll. The nazi psychobillies are as terrifying as they are fucking ridiculous to look at, and their appearance in the movie was one of those things that made me appreciate that there must have been a strong fad happening in the German 1980s underground rock scene that has not remained in the popular imagination or history of that scene. Like, usually the lazy go-to stereotype for a street nazi is a skinhead (as utilized in Good Vibrations), but here the skinheads are mixed in with the politically ambiguous Getto Sharks as just criminals, and the organized racists are psychobillies. Fuckin bizarre.

Verlierer was apparently made for German television in the 80s, and I could only find it with Spanish subtitles. If you don't speak German or Spanish, you may need to put in some extra effort to produce an intelligible viewing experience... but it will be well worth it.

1. The Legend of the Stardust Brothers [1985]

Spoilers: I cried. No shit.

I almost don't even know what to say about this movie. I don't actually want to give any of it away. I'll say this: it's a zany, low budget Japanese musical with touches of Rock'n'Roll High School, but narratively more elaborate. At its core, Legend of the Stardust Brothers

is a story about sacrifice, love, and remaining true to yourself against the sisyphean machinations of the capitalist music industry. One of the best movies I've ever seen.

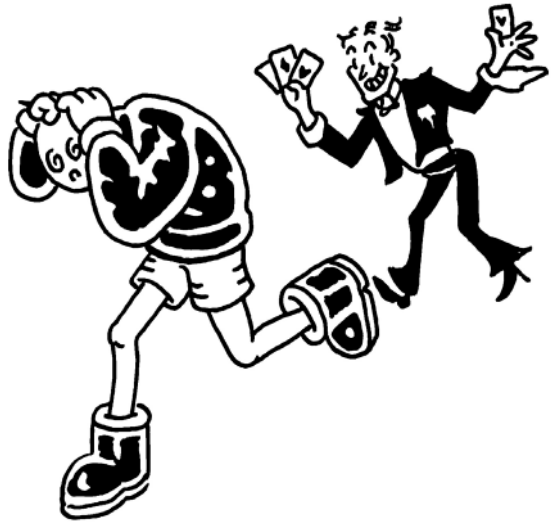
L-O-N-D-O-N BOOTS!

Honorable mention: Studio One Story [2003]

An oral history of the legendary ska, rocksteady, and reggae recording studio and label responsible for THE SKATALITES, DELROY WILSON, ALTON ELLIS, HORACE ANDY, THE HEPTONES, and many other Jamaican recording artists whose influence on early UK punk cannot be overestimated. The two-and-a-half hour running time betrays the amateur chops of the filmmaker, but as the interviewees are discussing events that took place nearly half-a-century ago, its understandable that he would want to pack in as much as possible. The result is a true document, in the fullest sense of the word "documentary."

What makes Studio One Story so good is it's no mess, no fuss editing. Each chapter opens with an interview about a different aspect of Jamaican music (sound systems, studios, toasters) and seamlessly weaves into a song that closes out the chapter with the iconic Soul Jazz Studio One frame. The rhythm of the film matches the rhythm of reggae: steady, solid, and boss.

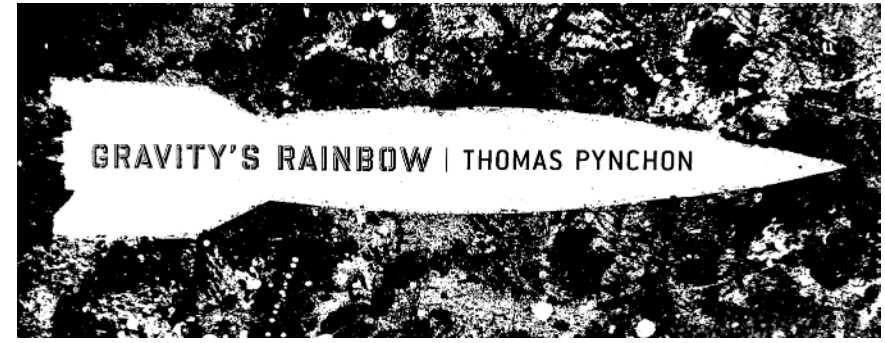
We're always on the prowl for excellent underground punk movies. If you know of any, please drop us a line: podcast @crimethinc.com



HOBBES' 2024 TOP 10 ENVIRONMENTAL ABSURDITIES

Absurdism is not always a friend of the gig. Sometimes it is. I will be allotting CHAOS ratings to each of my selections.

1. CURLING CLUB FEST (Ottawa, ON) – I put S.O.T.O on the ice this year and have no regrets. It was fun. [RATED: GOOD]
2. THE GIG THAT WASN'T (Scotia, NY) – No people, no burgers, no problem. We play anyway. [RATED: NEUTRAL]
3. WRESTLING DIRTBIKES GIG (Pittsburg, PA) – The exact right kind of chaos. [RATED: GOOD]
4. KOOKY SHIT MUSEUM GIG (White River Junction, VT) – My "cult" alarm went off, if anyone's looking for things to join. [RATED: NEUTRAL]
5. MAGIC SHOW GIG (Montreal, QC) – I have this thing where I hate magicians. [RATED: EVIL]
6. E–COLI WATER GENERATOR GIG (Buffalo, NY) – That was not the wind, I was blowing a fan to protect you from the fumes. [RATED: GOOD]
7. OPERA HOUSE/CHEESE MUSEUM GIG (Cuba, NY) – I do not need to explain this one. [RATED: NEUTRAL]
8. PRIVATE SWAMP PEOPLE UV LIGHT GIG (Ottawa, ON) – If a punk show must be private, it better be weird. It was. [RATED: GOOD]
9. GAY VAMPIRE LAARP GIG (Montreal, QC) – A real highlight showing up to play a friend's anniversary. [RATED: GOOD]
10. PISS LAUNCHING NEIGHBOUR GIG (Brooklyn, NY) – "I will throw my kid's piss and shit out of this window." [RATED: EVIL]

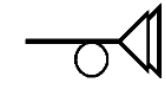


BOOK REVIEW: GRAVITY'S RAINBOW BY THOMAS PYNCHON (1973)

By Martin Force

Thomas Pynchon's 1973 novel *Gravity's Rainbow* (GR) is infamously really long and difficult to read, but also highly regarded (for some reason). There is a good chance that if you have already heard about this book, it's because you got punished by some dude about it.

I love Thomas Pynchon's books; Pynchon is an author that a lot of punks and anarchists love, and *Gravity's Rainbow* is widely considered his best book. There's good reasons people in our worlds like his books: he writes about anarchists and counter–cultural weirdos, he mixes highbrow with lowbrow, striking a magical balance way that is both serious and completely unpretentious (like the best punk). I know several other punks with a tattoo of the W.A.S.T.E. logo from Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*.



We Await Silent Tristero's Empire

It is also appropriate to have GR be the first book review in The Counterforce, since the name of this project is taken from part 4 of the book.

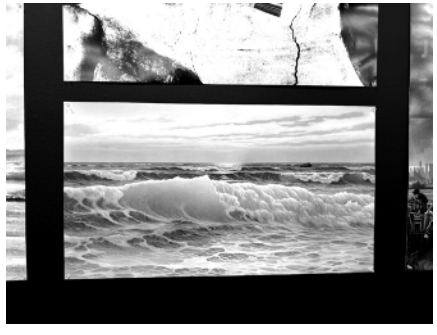
4

The Counterforce

What?

—Richard M. Nixon

The one thing I didn't take a picture of was the original copy of Loving Magazine and the ad for the Our Wedding flexi, one of my favorite moments of CRASS shithousery. What I would do to have an original copy of that ad to go along with the flexi.



Why did this show feel different from other attempts at establishing punk art as "legitimate"? Ultimately, because it was the show of an artist who just happens to be one of the most important artists in punk. It was treated with the respect owed to her and to the band, while neither getting treated as a novelty. No corny wall signage explaining to the unaware what "punk rock" is or reassuring liberals that "anarchy" isn't just a bunch of lawless wildlings sowing chaos. If you had no idea who CRASS was, maybe you'd think it was a collection of cool images and maybe you'd go home and check out the band, but for us, the punks, it really felt like the thing we all shaped our lives around and one of the most important bands (for me at least) in it matters. Or maybe I'm taking this way too seriously, which when it comes to CRASS, I have definitely been known to do.

BIFF BIFARO'S TOP TEN PUNK EXPERIENCES MAKING 2024 A YEAR WORTH REMEMBERING

With 2024 coming to a close and with a vast majority of my overwhelmingly positive punk experiences of this past year having a strong Canadian connection, it seemed to me that there would be no better time to write my inaugural column for The Counterforce, seeing that the zine originated in Canada [note: The Counterforce welcomes international submissions!]. And so, with no further adieu, join me as I turn back the calendar and fondly remember....

10. SCIENCE MAN 'U.S. and Canada Tour 2024'
Two weeks in April spanning the midwest, northeast, and a fair amount of STOMPIN' TOM's Stomping Grounds from Ontario to New Brunswick. Killer shows, top notch bands, tons of Canadian tourism, and toss in playing a grip of shows with both PAL and PSYCH BIKE, and the unforgettable night in Montreal possibly being my most memorable night of the year? What a near perfect experience.

9. U3 Fest
A single day / single venue festival in Philadelphia, PA, booked by sweet buds, filled with solid acts, and a surprise all vegan catered meal which was hands down the best I ate on that whole tour. Seeing Aussie buds R.M.F.C. and GEE TEE play and kick it with them at the weird Airbnb after party was the highlight for me. Other killer acts I cared about included SPLIT SYSTEN, KNOWSO, THE DRIN, and (keeping with the Canadian tie-in) PUFFER, who I happen to be driving on their tour.

8. Guerrilla Showfare gig series
Buffalo, NY has been my home for my entire life and this past summer two younger punks started a series of outdoor generator gigs. I went to the first one and ended up joining forces with them after they expressed their biggest issue was not having connects with out of town bands. The few Guerrilla Showfare gigs we ended up booking together were some of the most fun gigs I've ever had a hand in. Hardcore-punk is alive and well in Buffalo, NY! If you're still looking for Canada tie-ins, one of such events featured Montreal heavy-hitters DUREX.

7. THE VIPERS recording weekend
A long-time friend, and DC Hardcore heavy-hitter, Nicktape, called me in the spring. With his main band COKE BUST on something of a hiatus he had written a grip of hardcore-punk stompers but had no way to make them a reality. A five day trip to Buffalo was planned, a backing band formed, and we got to work. Deciphering his ideas, learning the songs, and immediately recording them. The trip ended with us playing one of the aforementioned Guerrilla Showfare generator gigs. Watch out world, THE VIPERS are here to stay! 7" coming soon.

6. LEAKING HEAD 'New England Weekend Tour 2024'
Middle of October, Rochester, NY hardcore-punk band LEAKING HEAD took advantage of my driving services. A weekend trip with NO big cities. Rural drives, small town gigs, a wide array of bands from hardcore to bluegrass to robot ska, breaking and entering for a place to stay, and so much more! Intrigued? As well you should be. Keep your eyes peeled for 'LEAKING HEAD: The Movie' shot by Canadian videographer Hobbes who joined us on this bonkers excursion documenting all the nitty gritty moments with my out of date VHS camcorder.

5. Palestine Solidarity Compilation Vol. 2
The initial Palestine Solidarity Compilation was released early this year and it was absolutely jam-packed with killer tracks from 27 different underground punk acts. At the tail end of the year lightning struck a second time releasing the second volume and another 27 songs by 27 equally awesome bands. I considered it an absolute honor to be asked to provide a track with my solo project NERVOUS TICK AND THE ZIPPER LIPS. Both comps worth a listen and a cause very worth supporting.

4. SPOOKY VISIONS 'ill-advised Halloween tour'
A solo synth-punk project I did as a way to stave off some Covid based insanity. Never did I think it would ever be a live act, let alone an act sought after around Halloween time. I guess being the spookiest act in Western New York, I need to start expecting such things! Four shows across New York State and three Canadian gigs, most all of them Halloween themed. A truly wild tour with incredible gigs, horrible parties threatened with a storm of piss and shit, and a sugar high I am still weaning myself off of. Seven Halloween parties in a week and a half and as much candy as you can eat at almost all of them? How the hell did we survive?! AND do I do it again next year??

3. S.O.T.O. VI
Surely all Canadian punks reading The Counterforce must be familiar with Ottawa's long-running Sitting On The Outside Festival. This year I was honored to be included by hard-working booker Hobbes and fest counterpart Ska-Jeff with helping out with the festival. I drove my backline of equipment up the night before and helped provide gear for just about all the bands playing the weekend. Both SCIENCE MAN and NERVOUS TICK were asked to play different days of the festival and every single aspect was a damn dream. Even getting COVID and being stuck in Canada for another week couldn't possibly spoil the killer time I had.

portion of the collection were Gee's collages, which had several originals framed and hung on the wall, but you can't have an art show on CRASS without it also being a Dave King show, right? Whether it's an art show or a historical exhibit it was really well done. I found myself wishing I owned some of these originals. It physically pained me.

If you already have the new CRASS book you've seen everything in this room, but to be inches away from original graphics, photographs, posters, and other political ephemera the band made puts everything in a different context. Some of the most common live photos of the band are included in the exhibit and I would never have expected them to be such small physical photographs. One of the most intimate feeling pieces in the collection was a version of the logo with the snake "breaking out" of the circle with a note from Dave King wondering if "it's time."

As you first walk in the room straight ahead, centered on the wall is a wild looking poster for two shows CRASS played in Ireland in September '82. You get to see alternative lettering throughout the collection (and book). This is one of my favorites.

Favorites from the collection (clockwise from top left): Alternative lettering posters; Original spray painted The Feeding of the 5000 banner; Originals of the insert art and political essays; Other alternative hand-drawn versions of the logo.

GEE VAUCHER ART SHOW

by Greg the Builder

There's something weird about walking down a side street in Manhattan and seeing a gallery window filled with a one of your favorite logos of all time. It feels both out of place and exciting at the same time. Truthfully, I am always conflicted when art and academ–ic institutions and "authorities" try to legitimize punk and the art made within it. As if we need their approval to know that what has come from our subculture has meaning and worth. These shows often feel corny and lazy, with the main audience being norms who think "punk is dead".

Gee Voucher's show at White Columns gallery in Chelsea, thankfully, stands out amongst the lackluster crowd. The show is both a launch for the recently published CRASS pictorial history book and a survey of Gee's work after the band's break up.

When you first walk in, you are welcomed by the original "THERE IS NO AUTHORITY BUT YOURSELF" banner, and it was kind of surreal to just be standing in front of some–thing we've seen in photos hanging behind the band for decades. They did a solid job making it because it's still in great shape. The show is split between two rooms. One entirely of CRASS artifacts and the other, larger room, of Gee's more recent work.

I'll talk about Gee's non–CRASS art first just to bury the lead. It spans a range of pieces that could have been in a CRASS insert if they were still a band (honestly, thank g–d they aren't) to large painted portraits. Most overtly political, some a little too on the nose. There were a couple pieces that if by anyone else would have felt like bad polit–ical street art. Am I being generous because it's Gee or was she the original Banksy? I don't know, I'm not an art critic or a historian, I'm a CRASS–obsessive idiot.

Gee's painting to me, an untrained eye, feels classically trained and from what I know of her history, that makes sense. The large portraits were cool, but the pieces I en–joyed the most were painted landscapes with less obvious political messaging. A pair of paintings of birds that had fighter jets hidden amongst them and a scene of large breaking waves with a small raft filled presumably with refugees risking their lives for what they hope is a safer life. I regret not taking many photos of this part of the show and not spending more time with it.

Okay back to the reason we're all here. This part was more of an exhibit on CRASS than Gee herself. It also felt more like a collection of artifacts than of art, but is that just what any art exhibit is? I don't really know, again, I'm just an idiot. Obviously a large

2. Upstate NY Hardcore Punk Showcase
When asked to book a gig for the best band from Albany, NY, I decided to swing for the fences and booked my favorite bands from the other big cities between their hometown and mine. WET SPECIMENS from Albany joined with URBAN CAMOUFLAGE from Syracuse, LEAKING HEAD from Rochester, and all sandwiched with two buffalo bands; brand new hardcore–punk band LOWEST FORM and long–running force to be reckoned with SCIENCE MAN. An all around perfect gig. Who needs the big city, Up–state NY hardcore–punk supremacy! This will become a reoccurring event, for sure.

1. Releasing 'The Monochromatic Mind of NERVOUS TICK' LP
A bit of a scary yet satisfying situation for me ends my top ten experiences this year. A long running solo project of mine, NERVOUS TICK AND THE ZIPPER LIPS, released its first LP and it was the first time I did a vinyl release where I truly had a hand in every single aspect of the process. From song writing to tracking to mixing to artwork to release, 'The Monochromatic Mind of NERVOUS TICK', recorded during height of covid isolation, finally came into existence. Putting that much of myself into something was admittedly a bit of a scary thing, but already I have done a follow up 7" EP, and even recorded the follow–up LP. Beware!

And that's a wrap! Next stop, 2025! What realm of idiocy shall we get into next? Stay tuned to find out!

See you at the fucking gig!

BELÉN'S TOP TEN SETS OF 2024

10. FUCKIN' LOVERS – TV Eye; NYC, USA
Gonna give myself the 10th spot to my favorite set that I played this year. LOVERS are gearing up right now to record a new record so we've been extremely selective about which shows we wanna play this year and practicing way more recently. Weird, not practicing had always been our thing. Although we didn't play any new songs, this set during No Deal Fest this year felt like the best we had played in a long while. It certainly helped that kids were losing their mind and singing along??? That never happens for us, quite a treat haha. We closed with two ALLERGY songs which the kids also seemed to love. Our cheeky little Christmas spirit opening, wearing Santa hats and playing a noise intro to Frosty The Snowman, was so silly and I couldn't help but have a smile on my face leading up to and during the whole set. Anyway this was only 1 of 3 shows we played this year but expect much more from us in 2025!

9. DESTRUCT – The Warehouse; Richmond, VA, USA
Man, there's some bands that you've listened to from time to time and seen for years, but they never quite hit the mark for you. Everyone is crazy about them and you just aren't seeing it. DESTRUCT was one of those bands for me. After seeing them at this show though, that all changed. This set was so crushing, my opinion totally flipped and I'm now absolutely a fan. They were support for one of my favorite contemporary bands, PHYSIQUE, but I gotta say they blew them right out of the water. Which is hard to do for a band at the S–tier caliber like PHYSIQUE. A band that at just about every show I've seen them at (including their first show ever) they took home the gold for show stealer. Maybe it was DESTRUCT's home court advantage, maybe they've just dialed in their sound so well, my nit–picky ass couldn't help but give credit where credit is due and appreciate these modern raw punk marvels for what they truly are.

8. KINETIC ORBITAL STRIKE – Bartram's Gardens; Philadelphia, PA, USA
What a fucking band, incredible tone, songwriting, art and ENERGY. Flawless execution of the Raw Punk style they're going for. Generator shows happen much less frequently than they used to when I first moved to Philly, so when I heard they were having an all-killer-local Gaza benefit at one of my favorite parks in the city, I knew it would be a barn burner. They played perfectly. It's hard to nail it every time like KOS, and they were on their A game. As was the crowd who were on their absolutely worst behavior. Was bummed when it seemed like they were calling it quits but now the cats outta the bag that they are returning with a new line up and I couldn't be more excited to hear new material from this Hardcore Punk powerhouse.

7. FAZE – on a fuckin boat; Ottawa, ON, CA
Who doesn't love FAZE? The punks love them, the capital H hardcore kids love em, the skins love them, the art kids love them, Connor's dad loves them. One of the most unique and fun bands right now, and every time I see them they rock the fuckin house, and in this case, rocked the boat. In this setting, of course, it was anything but the exception and boy were they exceptionally rockin. Specifically Rockin' In The Free World by NEIL YOUNG. Those maniacs, those genius maniacs, opened AND closed with a cover of it, and from what Connor said, tried to make it work playing it in the middle too but it just didn't work. Obviously, everyone lost their mind and the whole boat was singing along, second time even loader than the next. Incredible.

6. MURO – I don't remember the venue haha; Bogotá, CO
MURO is the greatest band in the world right now, even if it's members hate hearing that, I believe it to be true. The absolute perfection execution of Hardcore Punk excellence is unmatched by any band doing it right now. At least since GAUZE officially broke up in 2022, MURO takes the cake for me. I've seen em play a few times in different cities, but nothing beats seeing them play in an overcrowded bar, with nearly everyone in the crowd singing along and flipping out in their hometown. Second time I've been lucky enough to see them there and both times, cream of the crop. Hearing their new tracks of their latest album live with the unmatched energy, passion, and love the band has for Punk and each other that truly shines through when they play is a site to behold. Chef's kiss.

5. PUFFER – Cinco De Mayo; New Brunswick, NJ, USA
Cinco De Mayo in New Brunswick, New Jersey is probably my favorite place to go to a show in the USA right now. It's got a really young scene and those kids come out in droves to forget about everything in the world except moshing for the 15-20 minutes of just about every set I've ever seen there. It's got a magic to it that no other venue that I know of right now has. PUFFER, Canada's premier Rock and Roll band, of course brought it. The sing alongs, fighting with the swarm of 16-year-olds moshing in the friendliest way possible was truly a blast. It's hard to think of a better band that are that proficient at their instruments and make catchy music that isn't too corny or tongue-in-cheek, although I love the healthy amount of that they have in there.

4. ROCKY AND THE SWEDEN – Cousin Danny's; Philadelphia, PA, USA
Japan's ROCKY AND THE SWEDEN are another one of those bands I had heard but wasn't wild about. Seeing them live though, holy shit. If you were lucky enough to catch them on their East Coast Tour of the USA, you know what I'm talking about. Insane is all I can say. A seamless blend of Japanese Hardcore and Psychedelic Rock. I don't think I had given them a fair listen before because I must have missed all the insane Psych influence they had. As a huge Psych head, I was absolutely sold. Their guitar player, Pak, what a legend. Absolute ripper and moved through the whole venue, including the downstairs bar, to shred in a way only he could pull off without looking like an absolute rockstar jerk-off. Gotta say seeing and sharing the stage with a band full of legendary Japanese Hardcore veterans was a true honor and I'm so grateful FUCKIN' LOVERS had that opportunity.

3. HOME FRONT – First Unitarian Church; Philadelphia, PA, USA
This band, this fucking band. I don't think there's another contemporary punk band right now that I know just about every word to all their songs. Watching them live feels like I'm watching a classic 80's punk band in their prime. Both times I've seen them it left me with that same feeling. First time I saw them was in the pretty small upstairs space at Foto Club in Philly. While watching them I was thinking this will probably be the last time I'd probably get to see HOME FRONT play such a small venue. Selling out a 500-cap venue less than a year later, shit I was right. But the energy was no where near lost like so many other bands I've seen in small spaces (what I always prefer) vs larger ones. A room packed with most of the crowd singing along to every word is always a high I try to chase and HOME FRONT always delivers!

2. LEBENDEN TOTEN – Babyland; Pittsburgh, PA, USA
Watching LT, every time, feels like I'm high on inhalants the whole time. To be fair, half of the time, I am, but either way, this band feels like drugs do. Watching them at 3 AM during Skullfest though, what the fuck. Probably my favorite time I had seen them, which at this point may be close to 10? If you have never seen this band, do yourself a favor and catch them if you have the chance to. Listen, don't sleep. Everything about this band hits all the pleasures receptors in my brain and this set was truly something else.

1. TAQBIR – First Unitarian Church; Philadelphia, PA, USA
My absolute favorite set this whole year. This was after hopping over to Richmond to catch PHYSIQUE AND scabbing for TOTAL NADA on a Colombian tour where there was no shortage of incredible sets: MURO, DEAD HERO, EXTA, RESPLANDOR, NECRON 9, INNUENDO, MOCK EXECUTION, PREMIER REGIMEN, DESTRUCT plus HARAM on the same bill and so many more. But this set, this set took the cake. I think it was a combo of thinking I would never see this band live, the bands immaculate energy, truly great songwriting and the speech mid-set about the Genocide in Gaza. Either way, the wave of emotions I felt from this set cemented its place in my mind as the best sets, not only of 2024, but one of the best sets I have ever seen.